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ISRAEL SAYS SYRIA PUT NEW MISSILES CLOSE TO LEBANON

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
Special to The New York Times

JERUSALEM, Dec. 15 — Israel announced today that, in the last three weeks, Syria had stationed a variety of surface-to-air missiles along its border with Lebanon. Israel said the deployment seriously threatened regular Israeli reconnaissance missions over Lebanon.

Israeli military sources said the Syrian move — which Israel said began soon after Israeli jets shot down two Syrian MIG-23's in Syrian airspace on Nov. 19 — constituted a "dangerous change in the status quo."

'Alters the Entire Picture'

Any Israeli plane flying over Lebanon will now be exposed to Soviet-made SAM-2, SAM-6 and SAM-8 surface-to-air missiles, the military sources said. Before three weeks ago, the Syrians had no SAM-2 batteries near the Lebanese border and far fewer SAM-6's and SAM-8's in that area, the sources said.

Israel, through the United States, has been quietly trying to convey to Syria how seriously it views the new missile deployments, but thus far these warnings have not produced any change, Israeli military sources said.

"The advancement of the missiles to the Lebanon border is a fundamental process that alters the entire picture," Israel's Chief of Staff, Lieut. Gen. Moshe Levy, said in a television interview this evening.

'Can Be Dealt With Militarily'

"If you move up missiles to a point which, it is true, is located inside Syria, but whose range of kill-sphere covers Lebanon, that affects our freedom of flight in Lebanon to a significant degree," he said.

General Levy said Israel had demonstrated "that missile deployments can be dealt with very well militarily."

But Prime Minister Shimon Peres was more low-key, saying in a radio interview: "Israel is not looking either for a military confrontation or for a deterioration on the ground. I hope the Syrians act the same."

Nonetheless, by making the Syrian missile redeployment public, Israel has considerably "upped the ante" in the confrontation, said Itamar Rabinovich, an expert on Syria at Tel Aviv University.

Israel now has either to destroy the missiles or carry out its regular reconnaissance missions over Lebanon knowing that its planes can be hit at any moment, he said. If Syria wants to be the dominant force in Lebanon that it says it wants to be, he continued, it will either have to fire on the Israeli reconnaissance flights or deal with the embarrassment of having redeployed its missiles without daring to fire them. In any event, concluded Mr. Rabinovich, a volatile new situation has developed.

According to Israeli military analysts, the Syrians viewed the downing of their jets over Syrian territory as a change in the status quo by the Israelis.

According to Israeli military sources, two days after the Nov. 19 downing of the Syrian jets, the Syrians sent several mobile batteries of SAM-6 and SAM-8 missiles into Lebanon along the Beirut-Damascus Highway and around the Bekaa town of Baalbek.

The SAM-6, with a range of about 35 miles, is used against high-flying aircraft, while the SAM-8, with a range of only about 7 miles, is designed to hit low-flying planes.

Missiles Are Withdrawn

Israel immediately conveyed to the Syrians — through the United States — that they should withdraw the missiles from Lebanon, which they did "after a number of days," according to an Israeli Army statement.

But at the same time the mobile launchers were being removed, Syria installed three clusters of fixed SAM-2 missiles in batteries near the Lebanese border that had been prepared about a year and a half ago, but left empty until now, the Israeli Army statement said.

The SAM-2, the biggest of the Soviet surface-to-air missiles, has a range of between 25 and 35 miles and is used against high-flying aircraft.

Three new clusters of SAM-2's were installed, the Israeli Army statement said — one near the ridges overlooking the town of Zabadani northwest of Damascus, another south of the northern Syrian town of Homs and a third south of the northern Syrian port of Tartus.

The SAM-6's and SAM-8's that were pulled out of Lebanon were also redeployed around the fixed SAM-2 clusters, the Israeli Army statement said.

Several Missions a Week

Israel flies several reconnaissance missions over Lebanon every week. The high-flying Israeli aircraft cruising along the Syria border also photograph inside Syria, according to Israeli military analysts.

Israel, said General Levy, considers it both a right and a strategic necessity to mount regular surveillance operations inside Lebanon, because the Lebanese Government cannot control the activities of the anti-Israeli guerrilla groups based in that country.

Israel and Syria have been jousting over Syrian missile deployments in Lebanon since April 1981. At that time, Syria moved several mobile SAM-6 batteries into Lebanon after Israeli jets shot down two Syrian helicopter gunships that were taking part in a battle against Lebanese Christian militiamen. Syria ignored Israeli warnings to remove the missiles.

The Syrian missiles remained until June 1982, when they were destroyed by the Israeli Air Force in the first week of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. In addition to knocking out the SAM-6's, Israel only recently said it also destroyed several fixed SAM-2 batteries just inside Syria at the same time.

'Lack of Supervision From Above'

Until three weeks ago, Syria had refrained from reintroducing SAM-6 missile batteries into Lebanon or putting any SAM-2's along the border.

Because Israeli military officials feel that the Syrians decided to change the status quo after the Nov. 19 incident, they have tried to signal Damascus that the shooting down of its two MIG-23's did not constitute a change in Israeli policy.

Israeli military sources have said the decision to shoot down the two Syrian fighters was not taken at the highest levels of the air force, but was done on the initiative of the flight commander — an initiative that some Israeli military analysts believe was reckless.

Zeev Schiff, the widely respected military editor of the Haaretz newspaper, wrote an analysis arguing that the downing of the two Syrian jets had much in common with the Washington espionage scandal Israel is now embroiled in: both emanated from a "lack of supervision from above."

'Bound to Happen'

Mr. Rabinovich, the Syria expert, argued that while the downing of the two MIG's lead to the redeployment of the missiles, "it was bound to happen sooner or later."

Syrian policy since the start of the Israeli invasion has been to roll back every Israeli gain from that invasion, he said. Because Syria based missiles in Lebanon before the invasion, part of reasserting its hegemony there, argued Mr. Rabinovich, was bringing them back.

In the fall of 1982 the Soviet Union installed two advanced, long-range SAM-5 missile batteries near Damascus and Aleppo. Although these batteries not only cover Lebanon but most of Israel as well, Israel has always considered them part of Syria's basic defense.

Israeli analysts are generally agreed that the SAM-5's would not be used without prior Soviet approval, and probably only in the event of a direct attack on Syria — hence they have never been considered a threat to Israeli reconnaissance missions in Lebanon.

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